CODEPENDENCY

Codependency Worksheets: 5 Free Printable Exercises

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Codependency worksheets are written exercises that help you see how much of your life runs around someone else's needs, and start taking some of it back. Mental Health America describes codependency as a learned behavior (https://mhanational.org/resources/co-dependency/), often picked up from family, and recovery as learning new habits, like saying no. This page has five. Pick one and give it a week.

Codependency worksheets: exercises you can do right now

Most people who recognize their codependency (/codependency/) hit a wall pretty quickly: now what? You understand the pattern. You can describe it. You might even be able to explain where it came from. But knowing you are codependent and knowing what to do about it are two completely different problems.

That is where codependency worksheets come in. Not as busywork. Not as feel-good journaling that goes nowhere. These are structured exercises designed to make invisible patterns visible, to take the thing running silently in the background of your relationships and put it on paper where you can actually look at it and decide what to change.

Five exercises follow. Each one targets a different piece of the codependency puzzle: recognizing the behaviors, tracking the triggers, auditing what you are over-doing, planning a boundary, and reclaiming who you actually are underneath all the caretaking. You do not need to

do them in order, and you definitely should not try to do all five in one sitting. Pick the one that pulls at you. Sit with it for a few days. Come back for the next one when you are ready.

A notebook and a pen are all you need to start.

These worksheets are written for adults working on their own patterns, whether you are in therapy, in a recovery program like CoDA, or working through it on your own. If you prefer paper, print this page straight from your browser and write on it by hand, or choose Save as PDF in the print dialog to keep a copy. There is nothing to buy and nothing to download first.

Worksheet 1: The codependency inventory

Before you can change a pattern, you need to see it clearly. This codependency worksheet is a self-assessment. Not the vague kind where everything is open to interpretation. This one asks you to rate specific behaviors so you can identify exactly where your codependent patterns are strongest.

For each statement below, rate yourself on a scale of 0 to 3:

- 0 = Never
- 1 = Occasionally
- 2 = Often
- 3 = Almost always

Here are the statements:

1. I feel guilty when I do something for myself instead of helping someone else.

2. I say yes to requests I want to refuse because disappointing someone feels unbearable.

3. I check other people's moods before deciding how to feel about my own day.

4. I apologize for things that are not my fault, just to make the tension stop.

5. I do things for people that they are fully capable of doing for themselves.

6. I cancel my own plans when someone else seems to need me, even if they did not ask.

7. I have difficulty answering "What do you want?" because I genuinely do not know.

8. I feel anxious when I cannot reach someone I am worried about.

9. I take on other people's problems as if they were my own emergencies.

10. I base my self-worth on how needed I am by the people around me.

11. I avoid conflict even when staying quiet means betraying my own needs.

12. I keep giving more in a relationship even when I am getting almost nothing back.

Now add up your score. A total above 20 does not mean you are hopeless. It means your patterns are deeply wired and will benefit from deliberate, ongoing work. A total between 10 and 20 suggests some codependent tendencies that are worth addressing before they deepen. Below 10 means you likely have a few specific situations where these patterns show up rather than a pervasive dynamic.

Whatever your score, the number itself is less important than which specific items scored highest. Those are your starting points. If statements 1, 5, and 6 hit hardest, your primary work is around over-functioning. If 3, 8, and 10 scored high, your codependency is rooted in emotional enmeshment. Knowing the shape of your pattern changes what you do next.

For a deeper look at the behaviors behind each of these statements, the signs of codependency (/codependency/signs/) breakdown puts real-world context around each one. You can also take the codependency quiz (/quiz/codependency/) for a more detailed assessment.

Worksheet 2: The trigger log

Codependency runs on autopilot. You react before you think. Someone sighs heavily, and you are already scanning for what you did wrong. A friend mentions a problem, and you are mentally rearranging your week to solve it. The codependent response happens so fast that it feels like who you are rather than something you do.

The trigger log slows that down. It is a daily codependency exercise, and it works by creating a small gap between the trigger and the response, a gap where you can actually see what is happening.

Every time you notice a codependent impulse (you will start noticing more of them once you begin looking), write down four things:

What happened (the trigger): Describe the situation in one or two sentences. Just the facts.

What I felt (the body response): Not "I felt bad." Where did you feel it? Tightness in your chest? Knot in your stomach? Jaw clenching? The body often registers the impulse before the mind names it.

What I did (the codependent response): What did you actually do? Be specific and honest.

What I wish I had done instead: This is not about perfection. It is about planting a seed for next time.

Here is what an actual entry looks like:

Trigger: My partner came home from work frustrated and barely said hello.

Body: Stomach dropped. Immediately started running through everything I did today to figure out if I caused it.

Response: Asked three times if everything was okay, then made his favorite dinner even though I was exhausted and had planned leftovers.

Wished I had done: Let him have his mood without making it about me. Made the leftovers. Asked once if he wanted to talk, and accepted "no" as a complete answer.

Do this for a week. Not every moment of every day. Just the moments that catch your attention, the ones where you feel that pull to fix, rescue, accommodate, or disappear. After seven days, read back through your entries. The patterns will be obvious in a way they never are when they live only in your head.

The fawn response (/toxic-dynamics/fawn-response/) often shows up in these logs as the automatic mechanism behind the codependent reaction. If you see yourself consistently appeasing or people-pleasing under stress, that article explains why.

Worksheet 3: The over-functioning audit

Over-functioning is the engine of codependency. It is what makes the pattern feel productive and even virtuous. You are doing so much for everyone. You are holding everything together. You are the reliable one, the responsible one, the one who "just handles it."

This codependency activity asks you to get honest about what you are actually doing and whether any of it is truly your job.

Step 1: List everything you regularly do for other people.

Write it all down. Cooking, cleaning, scheduling, emotional support, crisis management, covering for someone at work, managing a family member's appointments, mediating between people who should be talking directly to each other. Everything.

Step 2: For each item, answer one question: is this genuinely my responsibility, or am I doing it because I am afraid of what happens if I stop?

Mark each item with an R (my responsibility) or an F (fear-driven). Be honest. "My responsibility" means you would still need to do this even if the other person were fully capable and willing. "Fear-driven" means you are doing it because you believe they cannot handle it, because letting things fall apart feels intolerable, or because you are afraid they will be angry or pull away if you stop.

Step 3: Look at every item you marked F. Circle three that you are willing to stop doing this week.

Not eventually. This week. Pick three things you can hand back, step away from, or simply stop doing. They do not need to be the biggest items on the list. Small is fine. The point is to start interrupting the pattern in real time.

You will probably feel anxious when you stop. The person you were over-functioning for might be confused, annoyed, or upset. That is information, not evidence that you were wrong to stop. It tells you how dependent the dynamic had become on your over-functioning.

If you are ready to take this further, how to break codependency (/codependency/how-to-break/) walks through the full process of dismantling these patterns step by step.

Worksheet 4: The boundary practice plan

Codependency and boundaries have an inverse relationship. The deeper the codependency, the weaker the boundaries (/boundaries/). This is not a coincidence. Codependency survives by making boundaries feel like betrayal, selfishness, or cruelty. Setting a boundary with someone you are enmeshed with can feel like cutting off your own arm.

This worksheet helps you plan one boundary. Just one. Not a full overhaul of your relational life. One specific limit you need to set, thought through carefully enough that you can actually follow through.

The boundary I need to set: State it plainly. "I need to stop lending money to my brother." "I need to stop answering work calls after 7 pm." "I need to stop being my mother's therapist."

Who is the boundary with? Name the person.

What will I say? Write the actual words. Not a summary. The exact sentence you will use. Having the words ready matters because your brain will scramble when the moment arrives, and you need something to fall back on. The saying no scripts (/saying-no/scripts/) page has templates if you get stuck here.

What am I afraid will happen if I set this boundary? Name it. They will be angry. They will stop talking to me. They will fall apart and it will be my fault. Write it down. Seeing the fear on paper takes some of its power away.

What will I do if they react badly? This is your follow-through plan. If they get angry, you do not cave. If they guilt-trip you, you repeat the boundary without elaborating. If they give you the silent treatment, you let them. Write out your plan so you are not improvising under pressure.

When will I set this boundary? Pick a specific day. Not “soon.” Not “when the time is right.” A date. The time will never feel right, so you pick one and show up.

Boundaries are the single most important skill in codependency recovery. Not because they fix the relationship, but because they prove to you that your needs exist and that you are allowed to protect them.

Worksheet 5: The identity reclamation exercise

This one is different from the others. The first four worksheets deal with what you are doing. This one asks who you are.

Codependency erases identity. Slowly, quietly, thoroughly. You spend so long organizing your life around someone else’s needs that your own preferences, opinions, interests, and desires fade into the background. Ask a deeply codependent person what they want for dinner and watch them struggle. It is not indecisiveness. It is that they genuinely lost access to their own preferences somewhere along the way.

This codependency worksheet has three prompts. They are simple to read and harder to answer honestly. Sit with each one. Write whatever comes up, even if it feels small or embarrassing.

Prompt 1: What did I enjoy before this relationship took over?

Think back. Before you became someone’s caretaker, fixer, emotional manager. What did you like to do? What made you lose track of time? What hobbies, interests, or passions have you quietly dropped because they did not serve the other person or because you “did not have time” (which usually means you gave all your time away)?

Write down at least three things. They do not need to be profound. “I used to read novels.” “I liked hiking.” “I used to paint.” The specifics matter because they are your breadcrumbs back to yourself.

Prompt 2: What would I do with a free Saturday if nobody needed anything from me?

This one is harder than it sounds. If you are deeply codependent, you might draw a blank. That blankness is the point. It shows you how far the pattern has gone. Push through the blankness. Imagine the day. Morning to night. No obligations, no one else's crisis to manage. What would you actually do?

Prompt 3: What opinion do I hold that I have never said out loud?

Codependency teaches you to suppress your own perspective to keep the peace. Over time, you stop having perspectives at all, or you have them but keep them locked away because voicing them feels dangerous. This prompt asks you to find one. It could be about the relationship, about politics, about something trivial. The content does not matter as much as the act of admitting you have a thought that belongs entirely to you.

These prompts are the beginning of codependency recovery (/codependency/recovery/), not the end of it. Recovery is a long process of rediscovering who you are when you are not performing the role of caretaker. If you want a more structured path through that process, the guide on how to stop being codependent (/codependency/stop-being-codependent/) lays it out step by step.

How to get the most from these exercises

A few things that make the difference between codependency worksheets that gather dust and ones that actually shift something:

Do not do all five at once. Pick the exercise that matches where you are right now. If you have never named your codependent behaviors clearly, start with the inventory. If you already know the pattern but cannot seem to stop it in the moment, the trigger log is your tool. If you feel like you have lost yourself entirely, start with the identity reclamation exercise and work backward.

Write by hand. There is research behind this, but the practical reason is simpler: writing by hand slows you down enough to actually feel what you are writing instead of just typing words.

Revisit your answers. These exercises are not one-and-done. Come back to your inventory in a month and re-score it. Compare your trigger logs from week one to week four. Track whether the items on your over-functioning audit are actually changing. Progress in codependency recovery is often invisible from the inside. Written records make it visible.

Talk about what comes up. A therapist, a trusted friend, a support group. These worksheets will surface things that are uncomfortable. Having someone to process that with makes the discomfort productive instead of just painful.

Frequently asked questions

Can worksheets replace therapy for codependency?

No. Worksheets are a useful supplement, not a replacement. They help you identify patterns and build awareness, but codependency runs deep and often involves childhood wiring that benefits from professional support. Think of worksheets as the homework and therapy as the class. Both are more effective together.

How often should I do these exercises?

The trigger log works best as a daily practice, even for just five minutes. The other exercises are most useful when done once, then revisited every few weeks to track changes. Do not try to do all five at once. Pick the one that feels most relevant right now and sit with it for a week before moving on.

Are these codependency worksheets printable, and is there a PDF?

Yes. Use your browser's print option to print this page and write on it by hand, or choose Save as PDF in the same print dialog to keep a digital copy. There is nothing to buy and nothing to download first. The exercises work exactly the same on paper as they do on screen, so a printed sheet and a pen are all you need.

Are these codependency worksheets for adults?

Yes. These are written for adults working on their own codependent patterns, including people in therapy, people in a recovery program like CoDA, and people working through it on their own. They are not clinical handouts for a provider to administer. They are self-paced exercises you can do yourself and, if you want, bring to a therapist as recovery homework.

More worksheets and workbooks

If this one helped, the other practice pages here work the same way, one skill at a time:

- People pleasing worksheet (/people-pleasing/worksheet/): catch the yes-when-you-mean-no habit and trace where it started.
- Setting boundaries worksheet (/boundaries/worksheets/): name your real limits and plan the conversation that protects them.
- Saying no worksheet (/saying-no/worksheets/): break the automatic yes and build a no you can actually say.
- Assertiveness workbook (/assertiveness/workbook/): a longer, module-by-module build for speaking up over several weeks.

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